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Russell Denial
Principal
The Chalfonts Community College
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Dear Mr Denial

Short inspection of The Chalfonts Community College

Following my visit to the school on 25 May 2017 with Clare Gillies, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school is improving because of the very clear leadership that you and your senior leadership team provide. You, together with governors and the senior leadership team, have an accurate understanding of the school and use this to identify strengths and priorities. You usefully obtain external validation of the quality of your work from Buckinghamshire Learning Trust and through working with other local schools.

After the previous inspection, the long-serving headteacher left in summer 2014 and there followed a period of time where there was a high level of staff and governor turnover. This had a negative impact upon the quality of leadership, governance and teaching at that time. Following your appointment in June 2016, you wasted no time in expertly forging a strong and cohesive senior leadership team, including appointing two new vice-principals. At the same time, the governing body restructured its committees and recruited new members to strengthen governance. Together, you have worked hard to recruit, train and retain a dedicated and hard-working team of teachers. Consequently, this year you have raised standards of teaching and learning, improved behaviour and ensured that the school is now fully staffed. As one parent commented, 'This new head is making Chalfonts great again and I'm delighted.'

Leaders and governors have ensured that the school has continued to focus on the

areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection. As a result, the quality of teaching, together with pupils' learning in English, has significantly improved. In addition, the school's new assessment system has been used to help pupils to develop a greater awareness of their current progress and how to improve their work across the curriculum. In 2016, pupils made significantly above-average progress in English, mathematics and particularly in the humanities by the end of key stage 4. In science and modern foreign languages, pupils' progress from their starting points was in line with national averages. While noteworthy improvements have been made, leaders and governors rightly acknowledge that more needs to be done to improve academic achievement in the sixth form, standards in a minority of key stage 3 lessons, and the attendance of some groups of pupils.

Although they have made progress in line with other pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils have not made the same rapid rates of progress as their peers in the past. You and governors rightly see this as an urgent priority, and are taking effective steps to eradicate these differences.

The large majority of parents responding to Parent View recognised and praised the improvements that the school has made recently, and many were particularly appreciative of the high-quality pastoral care and wide curriculum that the school offers. However, a significant minority expressed that they still have concerns, particularly in relation to behaviour and some teaching. Leaders and governors are rightly prioritising taking action to ensure that all teaching matches that of the best in the school, improve communication and foster more positive working relationships with some families.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is well led and managed. Most teachers plan interesting lessons. Many of them are very effective at using questioning to encourage deeper thinking and reflection and ensure a swift pace of learning. Leaders are aware that in a minority of lessons teachers offer less challenge and the pace is slower. Effective systems are in place to support these teachers to improve their practice. Most pupils know their targets, and their work in their books demonstrates that they make sound progress over time, particularly in English and the humanities.

Learners in the sixth form feel well supported by their teachers and particularly value the support they give. Leaders ensure that there are opportunities for students to take part in work experience, engage in enrichment activities, and undertake leadership roles. Students consequently develop a wide range of skills relevant to their future study or employment. However, the leaders' new monitoring system is not yet embedded sufficiently to provide them with an accurate overview of sixth formers' progress during their A-level courses. More needs to be done to ensure that students make consistently strong progress in all of their academic subjects.

Morale is high and staff recognise that the school is improving. There is a sense of pride, both in Chalfonts Community College and in the outcomes pupils achieve, that is shared between staff, governors and pupils. Pupils and sixth formers

confidently welcome visitors, are proud to share their work and enjoy working with their teachers.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors take a proactive and rigorous approach towards safety and the welfare of the pupils. Appropriate checks are made against all adults who work with pupils, and staff receive relevant and regular training on safeguarding. All policies and guidelines on all applicable aspects of safeguarding are in place and clearly steer the very good practice in the school, fostering a culture of vigilance. Leaders' meticulous record-keeping, together with regular communication between key staff and other agencies, ensures that timely and effective support is made available for vulnerable pupils. Governors ensure that there are reviews of the impact of leaders' policies and practices.

Through the planned curriculum, pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. Pupils confirm that they feel safe and know that members of staff are always available for them to share any concerns they may have.

Inspection findings

- During this visit, as well as evaluating safeguarding arrangements, inspectors focused on specific aspects of the school's provision including:
 - how effectively teachers meet the needs of all pupils, including the most able and those with low prior attainment
 - the quality of learning in English and science
 - how well leaders have improved attendance and reduced exclusions for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - students' achievement in the academic courses in the sixth form.
- Leaders set high targets, and the majority of teachers ensure that the most able pupils are regularly challenged through tasks that promote deep thinking and the linking of different topics. This gives the most able pupils the confidence to engage with, and successfully complete, high-level test questions. As a result, these pupils develop confidence and high aspirations together with the knowledge and skills to achieve them.
- In English and the humanities, teachers make particularly good use of the school's assessment and feedback policy to challenge all pupils to refine and improve their work and make strong progress from their starting points. Leaders have invested in training and support which has ensured that the quality of teaching in English is consistently good. Consequently, standards in English have risen in recent years and current pupils continue to make strong progress.
- In science and mathematics, while pupils make good progress in key stage 4, pupils' books demonstrate that a minority of teaching in key stage 3 is less effective. Leaders are aware of this and support strategies are in place to ensure

that all teaching is consistently as strong as the best examples in the school.

- Strong leadership by the head of inclusion, including good liaison with feeder primary schools and parents, ensures very effective provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders are passionate about wanting the best for every pupil, and relationships between staff and pupils are strong. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in school.
- Leaders have invested in extra staffing and a range of resources to support disadvantaged pupils. Last year, some disadvantaged pupils made less progress than their peers by the end of key stage 4. This is changing. Governors ensure that the pupil premium funding is used effectively to offer a bespoke range of interventions and in-class support designed to close these gaps. Leaders are aware that these gaps are still too wide, but are taking effective steps to eradicate them.
- Leaders introduced a new behaviour policy in the autumn term of 2016. While this has had a clear impact upon improving pupils' conduct around the school and behaviour for learning in the classrooms, it has resulted in increased exclusion rates this year. Leaders are well aware of this and all reasonable actions are taken to ensure that exclusions are kept to a minimum. To support continued school improvement, leaders have recently implemented new systems designed to improve communication and address the concerns that some parents still have about behaviour.
- Overall attendance has improved and is in line with the national average. However, you are aware that the attendance and exclusion figures for some groups, including the disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, need to be better. You have rightly prioritised a range of initiatives designed to reduce these gaps for these groups.
- Sixth formers have made particularly strong progress in vocational courses in previous years and they continue to do so. However, the progress of students following A-level courses has been below national averages. Responding to this, leaders have implemented more thorough monitoring of teaching this year and a new tracking system. This new electronic system is based on regular teacher assessments and designed to enable early identification of any learners falling behind their targets. However, it is not yet embedded well enough to be able to provide sufficiently accurate and reliable data from across the curriculum. Senior leaders are taking action to improve the accuracy of assessments and ensure more consistently strong rates of progress across the different A-level subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- consistently high expectations, pace and challenge are maintained throughout the school, particularly in key stage 3 mathematics and science
- attendance and exclusion figures for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities improve to match those of their

peers

- more accurate tracking and monitoring of students' progress through academic courses in the sixth form ensure that they make progress at least in line with national figures
- communication with 'hard-to-reach' parents and the local community is improved to share the successes of the school and the strong community atmosphere here.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Buckinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors visited 12 lessons and two tutor times and looked at learning jointly with senior leaders. We spoke with pupils in lessons and looked at a range of their work as well as meeting with pupils and sixth formers both formally and informally. Meetings were held with yourself, senior leaders and governors.

Documentary evidence, including policies, strategic planning documents and analyses of pupils' achievements, was evaluated. During the course of the inspection, I considered: emails and letters submitted by a number of parents, 170 responses to the online Parent View survey, and 88 responses to a staff questionnaire. Inspectors also scrutinised documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, records of governing body meetings and reports of visits from external consultants.